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SUBJECT: PKK Issue: Update on Violence and Political Developments
(October 16-31, 2006)

REF: ANKARA 6140 and previous

¶1. (SBU) This is another in a series of unclassified, periodic reports on the PKK issue in Turkey. Our primary sources for casualty statistics are mainstream Turkish press services, such as the Anatolian News Agency, and international wire services. While these are more reliable than most Turkish press sources, they are not necessarily unimpeachable. Another source is the Turkish Armed Forces General Staff (TGS) website which documents contacts/clashes with the PKK. Press services sympathetic to the PKK, such as Neu-Isenburg People's Defense Forces and Firat News Agency, tend to report higher numbers of the Turkish Security Forces casualties and are often otherwise unreliable.

¶2. (U) During the October 16-31 period, three Turkish security members were killed and nine were wounded. During the same period, Turkish security forces killed eight PKK terrorists in clashes in Mardin, Sirnak, Siirt and Batman provinces. During this period a total of 28 PKK members were arrested, including 14 who surrendered, 10 who were turned over to security officers by the Iraqi KDP, and four who were captured. Security forces detonated or seized landmines, hand-grenades, RPGs, rifles and C4 and A4 plastic explosives in different locations.

¶3. (SBU) Kurdish sources on October 30 wrote that during his meeting with his lawyers, Abdullah Ocalan said the ceasefire would expire May 16, 2007 unless the GOT took significant political action to solve the Kurdish issue. (May 16 is the 80th anniversary of the first Kurdish rebellion in Agri Province, and also the day after the Turkish Parliament must approve the new President of Turkey.) Meanwhile, Mesut Deger, CHP MP from Diyarbakir, told embassy officers on October 30 that PKK official Murat Karayilan on Roj TV had demanded that both Deger and Esat Canan (CHP - Hakkari) resign from their party.

¶4. (U) Following are political comments by Turkish and Kurdish officials:

-- TURKISH OFFICIALS:

- "Sabah" on October 26, quoted PM Erdogan as saying that the U.S. was not successful in the fight against terrorism in Iraq.

- FM Gul told October 27 "Hurriyet" that its neighbors won't let Iraq turn into a Yugoslavia. He warned that a division of Iraq would create worse chaos. In an exclusive in "Hurriyet" on October 24, when asked whether he expected concrete results from GEN

Ralston's visit, FM Gul said, "The Americans really are trying (hard) to do something. I told them the following, 'Can you explain to me the presence of PKK leadership in a country which is an ally of Turkey?' Indeed they feel themselves compelled to do something in a determined fashion. I'm observing that they have this will but from our point of view we are not at a position to leave (trust) everything to them." Gul stressed that the U.S. had a thousand issues to deal with including the PKK.

- "Hurriyet" and "Sabah" on October 31 quoted Jandarma Commander GEN Kosaner as saying that the number of PKKers who turned themselves in has increased. "We are talking to the families of those who are in the mountains (for them to convince their children to come down)," he added.

- Turkish Special Envoy Edip Baser at an ASAM conference in which he participated along with GEN Ralston in Istanbul on October 19, stressed that ending the PKK existence in northern Iraq as soon as possible was a necessity for Turkey's security that could not be postponed. Baser said, "If this new cooperation that we began does not produce satisfactory results, we might reach the point of asking for permission from the TGNA to use armed force." At the conference Baser also said that he personally believed that those mayors in the Southeast who supported the PKK must be sacked immediately.

- In an exclusive in "Sabah" on October 24, GEN Baser said that GEN Ralston was a soldier whom he trusted and quoted Ralston as saying, "He promised that there won't be any negotiations with the PKK." He added that there won't even be an implication of such a thing. "The door definitely cannot be opened to the politicization of the PKK," Baser said.

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Baser said, "If those in the camps return, Turkey, without U.S. help, will take them (in) and let them settle. The Republic of Turkey will take care of its citizens. Only those among them whose crimes are definite will be punished. Turkey made serious mistakes in (the fight against) separatist activities. This country is governed by politicians. One should introduce programs for Turkey to develop in a balanced way. This is not the job of the military. We neglected the psychological dimension in particular."

KURDISH POLITICIANS:

- Speaking at a meeting for DTP representatives in the Marmara region on October 30, DTP Chairman Ahmet Turk said, "We have never asked for the military to lay down arms." Turk said that his party is seeking a solution that did not require violence. He added that the Kurdish issue was a problem for Turkey and that one could not resolve this problem by sub-contracting it to others, such as the U.S. Turk noted the DTP was asking the PKK not to carry out any attacks and asked the military to show sensitivity to the beginning of a democratic process for the future.

15. (U) Following are selected columns on the topic:

- Murat Yetkin in October 26 "Radikal" referred to GEN Ralston's recent visit to Turkey and wrote that GEN Baser and other Turkish officials told him that reaching a result in the short run on the PKK would put Turkish-American relations back on a new track since they were derailed on March 1, 2003.

- Fehmi Kuru in October 26 "Yeni Safak" wrote that Turkey had reached a point where the government could adopt the right decisions to get rid of PKK terrorism. Kuru stressed that DYP leader Agar's recent appeal provided such an opportunity for the GOT. He noted that if evaluated well then Agar's suggestion was in the AKP's interests. He suggested that the GOT encourage Agar to take an initiative in order to implement his remarks.

WILSON